Maths St★r

Collecting Like Terms

In algebra, letters are used to represent numbers. Each one is called a "term", so collecting like terms involves collecting the letters that are the same.

e.g. $2a + 3b + a$

Here we can collect together $2a$ and a, making $3a + 3b$

However, if we have $2a + 3b + c$, we can't change this because all the letters are different.

We have to be careful, though! Always look at the sign in front of the "term". If we have $2a + 3b - a$, we collect together $2a$ and $-a$, leaving $1a + 3b$ (or $a + 3b$).

It's your turn!

Simplify:

1) $3a + 2b + 2a$

2) $4c + d - 2c$

3) $7a + 2b + 3c - 4a$

4) $2x + 4y + x - 2y$

5) $6a - 4b - 2a + 5b + a$

6) $5x + 2x - y + 3x + z$

Handy ★ Reminder: Don't forget to keep the sign in front of the term! Also, remember that x is the same as $1x$.

Go Pro!

Simplify: $7x + 3y - 4x + 2z - 2y + 3x - x + 4y - 5z$